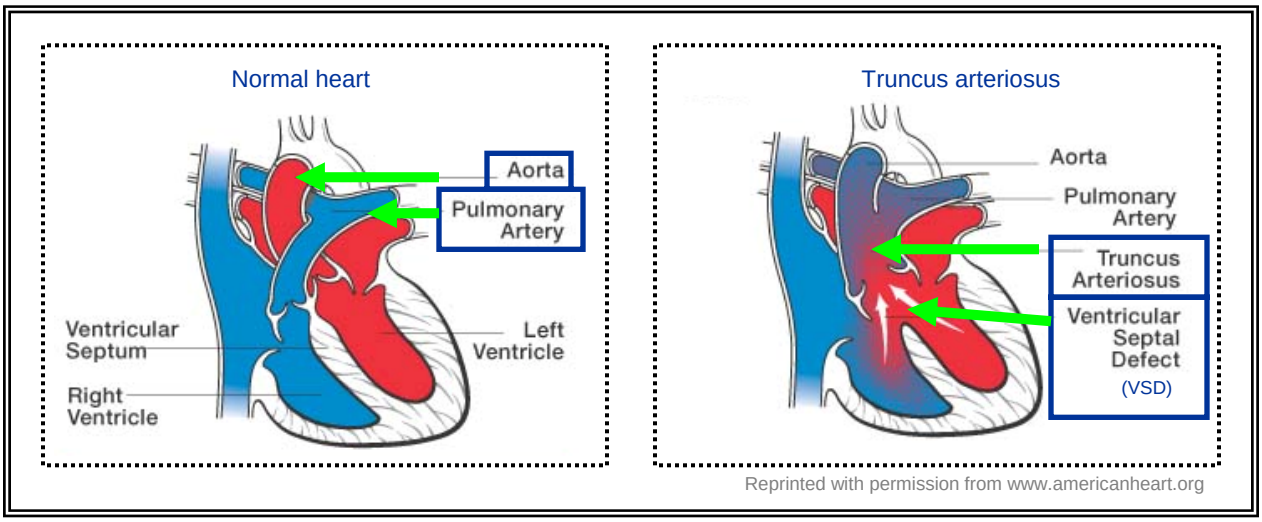
# Truncus Arteriosus

## What is truncus arteriosus?

Normally, there are two separate blood vessels leaving the heart: the **aorta** (which carries blood to the body) and the **pulmonary artery** (which carries blood to the lungs). Babies with truncus arteriosus (also called **common truncus**) have a single, large blood vessel leaving the heart. After leaving the heart, this single blood vessel divides to carry blood to both the body and the lungs.

This large blood vessel usually has one large **valve** (opening) which may have between two and five **leaflets** (sections). Heart valves typically have either two or three leaflets. Children with truncus arteriosus also typically have a **ventricular septal defect** (VSD; opening between the two lower chambers of the heart).

Approximately 1% of all babies with a congenital (present at birth) heart defect have truncus arteriosus.






## What causes truncus arteriosus?

Currently, the exact cause of truncus arteriosus is not known. Heredity likely plays a role in the development of all heart defects, meaning that if someone had a congenital heart defect, he or she has an increased chance of having a child with a heart defect.

## How is truncus arteriosus treated?

Truncus arteriosus is usually corrected with surgery; the goals of surgery include closing the VSD and creating separate paths for blood going to the lungs and the body. Your child's doctor(s) will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

## For more information

**American Heart Association** - http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=11105
**Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center's Heart Center Encyclopedia** – http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/heart-encyclopedia/default.htm
**MedlinePlus** - http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/congenitalheartdefects.html
**National Heart Lung and Blood Institute -** http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/chd/chd_what.html

***Sources:*** Cincinnati Children's Hospital, American Heart Association